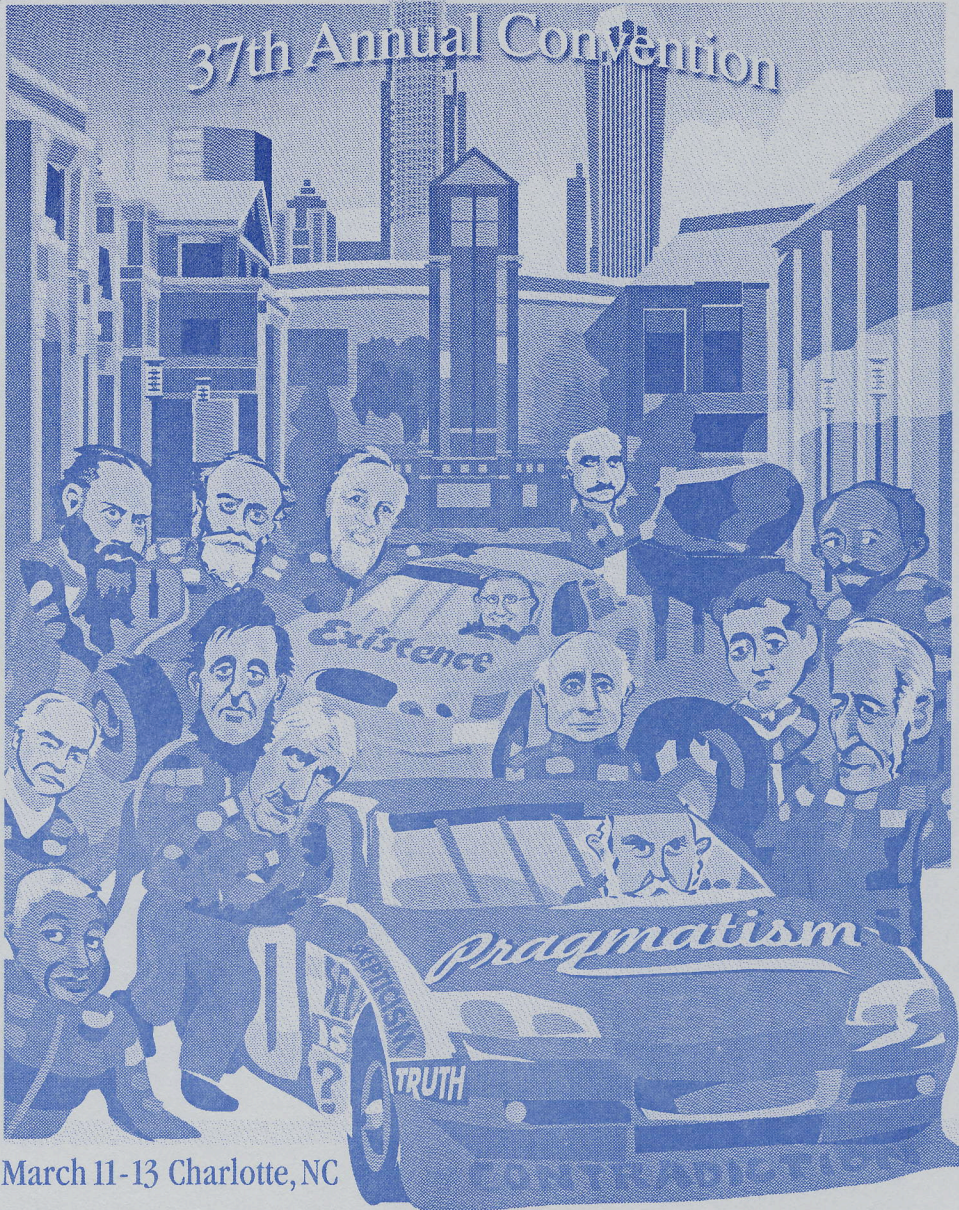


# SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

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in his career, Pratt explains, Royce had always held to a principle of neutrality in the classroom. Furthermore, he had hitherto extolled the role of loyalty as engendered in the state of Germany. The letter marks a modification to Royce's approach and an abandonment of his principle of neutrality. In this letter, he quotes his own comments to a class of students wherein he condemned the act, saying to his German peers: "You may triumph in the visible world, but at the banquet where you celebrate your triumph there will be present the ghosts of my dead slain on the *Lusitania*" (265). He declares his new position: "I am no longer neutral, even in form" (268).

Pratt and Sullivan's contextualization in their introductions to their new edition of Royce's *Race Questions* are valuable tools to those of us who are only recently introduced to Royce's work. Likewise, the essays provide valuable reintroductions for those of us who are new only to the expanded edition's fresh material. The new material in the 2009 edition is worthwhile both to the student of the philosophy of loyalty as well as the student of the American philosophical tradition. Pratt and Sullivan's edition of *Race Questions* is a noteworthy addition to the library of works of American philosophers.

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***Religious Naturalism Today: The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative.*** Jerome Stone. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. 259 pages, \$75.00

Religious naturalism is a philosophical perspective which states that only the world of nature is real, and that the divine is fully a part of nature. *Religious Naturalism Today* is distinctive and unprecedented as it combines a family-portrait of religious naturalists past and present and explores religious naturalism's major contested issues. The book's subtitle, "The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative," alludes to the view that this philosophical movement is making a revival and represents a viable option in religious thinking. The purpose of the book is to "trace this story and to analyze some of the issues dividing these religious naturalists, issues which a religious naturalist must face" (xii.) Overall the book is a detailed map of and guide to religious naturalism and it may serve as a companion for someone who would like to consider nature and naturalism as subjects for religious reflection.

*Religious Naturalism Today* is divided into six chapters consisting of two parts, as well as an introduction and conclusion. Part One covers the movement's "classic period" and discusses several of that period's major representatives including George Santayana, Samuel Alexander, John Dewey, Bernard Meland, and William Bernhardt. Part Two discusses more recent religious naturalists including Bernard Loomer, Robert Neville, and Robert S. Corrington. An interlude briefly discusses religious naturalism in literature.

Stone's introduction, in my judgment, is the most crucial part of the book because it provides substantial historical background and sets the scene for the book's main theses and arguments. As the introduction sets out, Stone takes a synoptic view of religious naturalism's history and grounds that history in two major philosophical schools: the naturalism of Columbia University in New York where Santayana was read and Dewey taught, and the Chicago and Illif Schools of Theology where the philosophy of Meland, Bernhardt, and Loomer exerted

tremendous influence. As Stone puts it, the difference between “Columbia naturalism” and “Chicago naturalism” is reflected in the idea that, “the Columbia naturalists tended to approach religion critically, while the Chicago naturalists tended to construct a religious outlook to which they could be passionately committed” (5.) Stone omits the theistic naturalism of process philosophy (Charles Hartshorne, for example) from this historical picture because while process theology and religious naturalism both affirm an immanent divine nature, religious naturalism denies any “beyond” or “transcendental” aspect of the divine that process pantheists would include in their definition of God (*pantheism*—a term indicating that while God may be found “within” nature, there are always aspects of God which are “beyond” nature.) As I see it, this omission was particularly interesting given Stone’s discussion about Samuel Alexander, an early twentieth-century British philosopher who was so influential for Whitehead and Hartshorne, and whose ideas I take to be very much in line with the pantheistic vision. That minor detail aside, Stone’s explanation of the historical background involved with religious naturalism was very clear and it provided a good preview for what was to come throughout the rest of the book.

Chapter One, “Philosophical Religious Naturalism” and Chapter Two, “Theological and Humanist Religious Naturalists,” both discuss the intellectual origins of religious naturalism while articulating points of contention among its various proponents. In these chapters one finds Santayana and Dewey making their appearances, as well as their theological contemporaries including Bernard Meland, whose “tempered optimism” advocates a theocentric, rather than egocentric, view about God, and Bernard Loomer, whose “empirical theology” calls for a reality-centering and down-to-earth approach to religion and nature.

“Analyzing the Issues,” the third chapter, articulates some of the main issues for religious naturalism during its classic period. This chapter places the previous chapters in context, and by reading it this reviewer gained a fuller appreciation for the philosophical complexity involved with the topic of the book.

The Interlude provides a nice segue into Chapter Four, “Sources of Religious Insight,” by looking at poets, nature writers, and literary figures—for example Emerson and Thoreau—who identified how nature can bring about attitudes of a religious character within a philosophical framework. Chapter Four full develops that line of analysis by presenting the idea that nature can afford grace and induce appreciation of a “larger picture.” A good deal of this chapter also discusses how the religious disposition that nature can afford is indeed conducive to the scientific spirit, at least insofar as that spirit exercises “disciplined determination” and “artistically crafted expression” (160.)

The last two chapters are titled “Current Issues in Religious Naturalism” and “Other Current Religious Naturalists.” I found the current issues chapter to be a guide to the content found in the final chapter. There the reader encounters Stone’s explanation of several current philosophical views expounded by today’s leading thinkers in the field of religious naturalism. Of the most prominent religious naturalists, Stone discusses the philosopher Robert S. Corrington, who is now widely considered to be the leading speculative thinker in the American tradition. Corrington’s brand of religious naturalism, called “ecstatic naturalism,” has set the tone for contemporary metaphysics in the field of American philosophy and religion, and his impact and philosophical influence is currently unmatched. Stone summarizes Corrington’s form of religious naturalism by describing how it draws on “...a rich metaphysical tradition including Schopenhauer, Schelling, C.S. Peirce, and Justus Buchler...that departs from much

postern hermeneutics by following Peirce in anchoring the semiotic relation within the natural world” (211.) I am glad that Stone included this new and exciting form of naturalism—*ecstatic naturalism*—in his book and I am sure that after reading the concluding chapter many will search out Corrington’s philosophy finding it to be one of the more challenging and meaningful alternatives within the religious naturalist outlook.

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